WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for selecting software patches for installation on a system, comprising the steps of:

analyzing the system to identify patches previously installed on the system; and

identifying at least one patch as a candidate for installation on the system based on the results of the analysis.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of designating the patch identified as a recommended patch for installation on the system based on the patches identified during the analysis.

3.   The method of claim 2, wherein the patch identified for installation is either a new patch or a successor patch for a previously installed patch.

4.   The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of selecting the patch identified for installation on the system.

5.   A method for selecting software patches for installation on a system, comprising the steps of:

analyzing the system to identify patches previously installed on the system; and

generating a list of patches as candidates for installation on the system based on the results of the analysis.

6.   The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of rating each patch according to its reliability of installation.

7.   The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of designating at least one patch on the list as a recommended patch for installation based on the rating for such patch.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the recommended patch for installation is either a new patch or a successor patch for a previously installed patch.

30

9.   A method for selecting software patches for installation on a system, comprising the steps of:

analyzing the system to identify patches previously installed on the system; and

based on the patches identified, rating a plurality of patches to be installed according to their reliability for installation; and

designating at least one patch as a recommended patch for installation on the system based on the rating of the patch to be installed.

31